

PERS-3

26 October 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR :

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Deputy Director, Foreign Broadcast  
Information Service

FROM :

STAT

Deputy Director of Personnel for  
Policy, Analysis and Evaluation

SUBJECT :

Executive Summary of Personnel Evaluation  
Precepts Review

1. I appreciate the support you gave  of my staff in her review of the Precepts for CIA Personnel Evaluation Boards and Panels--a review that we began after the Precepts had been in effect for nine months, in accordance with our charge to evaluate periodically personnel and career management programs. I know how valuable your time is, and I am therefore particularly pleased that you were willing to take the time to sit down with  to discuss at length your perceptions of the system, and your ideas as to how the process might be made smoother.

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2. With a view to acting on the information we obtained, we have prepared an Executive Summary which is attached. We are currently developing an Action Plan, based on our findings, to be presented to the Personnel Management Advisory Board for their consideration.

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cc: Director, FBIS

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**ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNAL USE ONLY**Personnel Evaluation Precepts ReviewExecutive Summary

In fulfillment of that part of the charter of the Office of Personnel that states that one function will be to "evaluate the personnel and career management programs and activities of the Career Services, and periodically submit evaluations to the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence," a survey of selected senior Agency managers was conducted in April and May 1981, to determine and evaluate their reactions to the year-old Precepts for CIA Personnel Evaluation Boards and Panels. Those interviewed included office Directors and Deputies, Executive Officers, Administrative and Personnel Officers, and Staff and Division Chiefs, and represented each of the four Directorates as well as the Office of the DCI. The report contains several major sections and offers conclusions and recommendations. This summary abstracts the contents of the report.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Almost without exception, the managers believe that the new system defined by the Precepts is, in general, a vast improvement over the previous one. More importantly, the belief that there should be no further change at this point is essentially unanimous. Managers stated, one after another, that change has been much too frequent--that one year is not sufficient for a brand new system to be "shaken down" or for people to get used to it, and that any improvements now "would be too marginal to be worth the hassle." They emphasized that because of the flexibility inherent in the system they are able to work with it, adapting it to their particular needs, and that they want to continue to be able to do so.

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2. Specifically, several managers noted that a major factor in favor of the panels is that they have "brought democracy to the system" and that "the vast majority of the employees have confidence in the system," believing that it works and that their treatment at the hands of a panel is better than that at the hands of a single supervisor. Another big "plus" cited in favor of the panel system is that "it has forced everyone to be more disciplined," to "sit down and look at their people to try to determine their potential" and "to look at the negative aspects of their people, so as to be able to explain to them" why they rank where they do.

3. Despite the generally favorable reaction, many managers believe there are areas in which further improvement is possible. For example, it was noted that although the new board and panel system is totally effective, it is not efficient in terms of manpower and money.

4. However, the point that was made over and over again during the course of the interviews is the one that cannot be stressed too much. It was perhaps best put by the office Director who asked that the DDCI be informed, through the Executive Committee, that an extensive review of the Precepts and their impact on management was performed, and that management's response was a plea for stability, at least for the time being.

#### EFFICIENCY OF THE SYSTEM

##### Senior-Level Boards and Panels

Some concern has been expressed about the amount of time being spent on evaluations of officers, often by senior personnel. Very small offices find that a formal panel process has little utility.

### Ranking of Secretaries and Wage Board Employees

It is the consensus that the movement of secretaries and clericals, who cannot be promoted without available headroom anyway, is too rapid to make ranking for promotion useful. Even those evaluated by the secretarial panels see waste in the system. Wage Board employees generally are on a different pay system, involving qualification through apprenticeship systems; thus, even ranking for potential, which is all that is done, is of questionable value.

### Junior Officer Panels

Many managers believe that panel evaluations of officers below the "basic full-performance level" may be unnecessary, as an evaluation of potential may not be as meaningful at the lower levels.

### CATEGORY DESCRIPTORS

While it is generally perceived that the new Descriptors are an improvement, several managers suggest that further improvement is needed in the definitions of the Categories and the distinctions between them. There is confusion as to how the Categories relate to the ability to promote, and about the weight that should be given potential versus performance or value to the Agency.

### Correlation of Categories With Promotion

There is so much emphasis in the Categories on potential that panels, in determining whether or not an employee should be promoted, are massaging the system to the benefit of those they want to promote.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNAL USE ONLY**"Potential" in Relation to the Categories

There is a question as to the ability to judge an employee's potential before he or she has reached GS-10 (or GS-11) or "full performance." The increased emphasis on potential in the Categories has led to confusion about weighting, and the above use of Category IV.

NUMERICAL RANKINGS

While there is no requirement in the Precepts that employees be numerically ranked sequentially, some offices use such a system to arrive at evaluation decisions. However, others object to assigning numbers to people, preferring to list employees alphabetically within Categories and providing narrative feedback.

USE OF FACTORS

Many believe that the use of "potential" as a Factor, in addition to it being a major part of each Category, is causing confusion. "Mobility" and "training" also cause problems. Several other Factors which are considered imprecise are seen to have the possibility of introducing bias into evaluations. Nor are all of the Factors equally applicable to generalists and specialists; or to professionals, technicals, clericals, and secretaries.

IDENTIFICATION OF LOW PERFORMERS

There seems to be confusion concerning the assignment of employees to Category IV. The Precepts do not require that some employees be placed in Category IV. However, there is a requirement to identify a "bottom 3 percent." Most panels and boards seem to struggle with both, as the identification of

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the 3 percent is often simply a statistical exercise that has no relationship to the performance of the employees. Almost without exception, managers prefer listing Category IV personnel only.

#### COMPOSITION OF BOARDS AND PANELS

As long as the flexibility now inherent in the Precepts is retained, the offices believe that the system is workable.

#### ANNUAL EVALUATION AND PROMOTION CYCLE

Most believe that an annual evaluation cycle is generally sufficient but that neither an annual nor a semi-annual promotion cycle is sufficient. Time in grade sometimes is given excessive weight in promotion decisions rather than being used as a guideline.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

A couple of ideas expressed during the course of the interviews do not properly fall into any of the sections of the Report of Interviews With Agency Managers. However, they bear repeating because of the thought behind them.

One observation was that "panels and boards are prisoners of those who write the PARs" and, consequently, that "if the PARs are too long, those being rated are sometimes done a disservice because the panel hasn't the time to read" them in their entirety.

In a different context, another observation was that "when policy is made, it should not only be signed by a senior officer, but it should also be distributed to everyone." The background to this statement is that

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the Precepts themselves were initially distributed not to office Directors, but rather to their Administrative and Personnel Officers, who made the decision on the final dissemination.

Concurrent with this observation was the further one that "one of the difficulties of [the current personnel management] system is that it was imposed on the offices"--that "it doesn't represent a carefully thought out managerial philosophy of where CIA should go," and that it appears "to have been designed in isolation."

#### SUMMARY

While the general overall reaction has been positive, the areas cited are seen to need further improvements and refinements to make the system even more effective.

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Deputy Director, Foreign Broadcast  
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Deputy Director of Personnel for  
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MEMORANDUM FOR : [redacted]  
Career Management Officer  
Foreign Broadcast Information Service

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Deputy Director of Personnel for  
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MEMORANDUM FOR : [redacted]  
Chief, Personnel and Training Branch  
Foreign Broadcast Information Service

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~~Deputy Director of Personnel~~ for  
Policy, Analysis and Evaluation

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